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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 ABU DHABI 000956

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SUBJECT: AFGHAN DEFMIN WARDAK MEETING WITH AMBASSADOR

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Classified By: Ambassador Michele J. Sison fore reasons 1.4 (b & d).

¶1. (S) Summary: On June 8, Afghan Minister of Defense General Wardak told Ambassador that Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan has informed President Karzai that the UAE would donate nine Mi-19 helicopters to Afghanistan. General Wardak has passed the UAE and other donor countries a list of requirements and is focused on trying to turn commitments into deliveries to meet the rapid growth of the Afghan National Army (ANA). The ANA's number one priority is for increased tactical mobility, followed by special operations equipment and a way to deal with IEDs. General Wardak expressed hope that other Arab/Muslim countries would follow the UAE's lead and deploy troops to Afghanistan. End summary.

¶2. (S) On June 8 Ambassador, accompanied by DATT, USLOChief and Econchief met with Afghan Minister of Defense General Abdul Rahim Wardak, accompanied by Afghan Ambassador Farid Zekria, MG Robert Durbin (Combined Forces Commander - Afghanistan, CFC-A), and ANA Col. Salah Hamadi. General Wardak was visiting the UAE to try to accelerate delivery of promised equipment and brief the UAE on the situation in Afghanistan. He said that he had a meeting scheduled with Abu Dhabi Crown Prince (and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces) Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan (MBZ) on June 10. He would also be meeting with UAE Armed Forces Chief of Staff LtG Hamad Thani Al-Rumaithi, and had requested a meeting with UAE Vice President/Prime Minister/Ruler of Dubai Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, but was waiting for confirmation. Wardak was not visiting other countries on this trip.

ANA Growing Quickly

¶3. (S) General Wardak explained the only way to stabilize Afghanistan was for Afghans to take the lead. For that reason, the Afghan National Army was accelerating its growth, which results in a pressing need for training and equipment. In addition, he noted, the ANA had decided to switch from Russian standard equipment to NATO standard equipment. This improves interoperability, but puts an additional demand for equipment on donor countries. The ANA had developed a list of required equipment that it was passing to donor countries. General Wardak passed it to the UAE and to other donors during Abu Dhabi's February 2007 IDEX defense exhibition and

in his visits to NATO. Wardak explained he had received a number of commitments, but deliveries were falling short, with \$1.3 billion promised and \$230 million delivered to date.

¶4. (S) MG Durbin explained that the ANA's first priority was for air and ground tactical mobility. The second priority was for upgraded special operations equipment. General Wardak interjected that the ANA desperately needed technology and tactics to defeat IED's. He was pushing donors for infantry combat vehicles (ICVs) and awaiting U.S. up-armored HMMVVs (first 256 scheduled for mid-June). MG Durbin explained the U.S. appropriation for Afghan assistance would not be able to translate into equipment quickly enough to meet the rapidly growing ANA. The gap needs to be filled by NATO and/or by other donors.

NATO falling short

¶5. (S) General Wardak complained that -- with the exception of the U.S., which was shouldering too much of the burden -- NATO forces were not delivering as quickly as needed. The NATO training teams (OMCTs) had not come up to the level needed and the "big NATO countries" were not delivering enough equipment quickly enough. He stated, by way of example, the German military was decommissioning its Leopard 1 tanks rather than "cascading" them to the ANA. The Germans had already decommissioned 800 Leopard 1 tanks, but had another 1200 remaining. If the ANA could get these tanks, it would use the Leopard 1 as its main battle tank. MG Durbin said that he believed that the Germans would be more likely to provide spare parts rather than the Leopard 1s, and that the Afghans were also pursuing other countries for the Leopard 1s, including Canada. General Wardak added that he had already asked the Canadians for excess M-113 Armored Personnel Carriers (APCs), but so far none had been delivered.

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How the UAE can help

¶6. (S) Ambassador explained that the UAE was very focused on Afghanistan. When the ANA Land Forces Commander General Bismullah Khan met with UAE Armed Forces Chief of Staff LtG Hamid Thani Al-Rumaithi in January, the UAE side had been very forward leaning. The UAE had subsequently disbursed another \$30 million in (general) assistance and was renovating two runways in Afghanistan for military use. General Wardak explained that the UAE had originally planned to donate Puma helicopters to the ANA, and then had mentioned Gazelle helicopters. However, MbZ had said that the equipment was too old and would raise interoperability problems. Wardak noted that two days earlier MbZ had called President Karzai and offered nine Mi-17 helicopters. Karzai instructed Wardak to follow-up in his meeting with MbZ. Wardak asked for USG assistance in ensuring timely delivery of the helicopters. He also noted that the UAE might be replacing some of its older equipment, which could be cascaded to the ANA: including possibly 155 mm towed artillery (M-109s) and armored combat vehicles (ACVs). MG Durbin suggested that the UAE could upgrade its special operations equipment in theater and transfer its older "in place equipment" directly to the ANA as it redeployed. The parties noted that third party retransfer conditions applied for U.S. origin equipment.

Bring in the rest of the GCC

¶7. (S) Wardak explained the Afghans and the Gulf states shared a number of the same concerns and that a well trained and equipped ANA promotes regional stability. He noted that Afghanistan and the Gulf both shared concerns about Iran and its nuclear ambitions and that -- for Afghanistan -- "Iran was close to being an enemy." He argued that if there were a

combined effort by the Arab Gulf states, the ANA could develop into a strong effective force. Wardak said he had approached the Saudi Chief of Staff during IDEX, but that he did not express much interest. Wardak said he had also tried to contact his friend Saudi National Security Advisor Prince Bandar in Sultan Al-Saud. He noted that in the past, Gulf countries such as Saudi Arabia brought in division-sized units of Pakistani and Bangladeshi troops to serve in their militaries. Once Afghanistan stabilized, he suggested, the ANA could fill the same function. Wardak explained that part of the problem was one of language, but added that the UAE had offered to train ANA troops in Arabic.

18. (S) In response to Ambassador's question about the UAEG's idea to have Jordanian and Bahraini special forces deploy to Afghanistan, Wardak stated having other Arab/Muslim troops deploy to Afghanistan was an excellent idea. These deployments would send a clear message to the "extremists" and would also provide the troops with good field experience.
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